

News Release



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In the Heart of Los Angeles

Advisory Committee's Vision For a New Cornfield State Park

LOS ANGELES – The 36-member Cornfield Advisory Committee, comprised of community leaders and representatives of varying interest groups, last night reached consensus on its final advisory report recommending how California State Parks should develop and use the 32-acre Cornfield property near downtown Los Angeles.

The Advisory Committee, meeting in the El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument district, offered in its final report a broad vision for both the interim and permanent uses and facilities at the site, focusing on four essential themes -- connectivity, cultural/historical, recreation and transportation.

"We are very pleased with the recommendations found in this report," said Ruth Coleman, Acting Director of California State Parks. "This committee has taken its charge very seriously and has given us a solid foundation for development of this park. We applaud their efforts, and look forward to continuing our work with them."

As part of its report, the Advisory Committee addressed an important issue in the area -- the need for recreational opportunities -- and suggested in its report that areas at Cornfield be set aside for a variety of public uses, including sports such as soccer, for picnicking, and for large-scale community events such as Cinco de Mayo or Chinese New Year celebrations.

State Parks also is currently negotiating with the city of Los Angeles for a land exchange that would allow the city to run a full-time soccer program and other organized sports at the nearby Taylor Yard property. That also was purchased by State Parks but sections of it would be turned over to the city under the land exchange arrangement envisioned in the negotiations.

The Cornfield Advisory Committee was created through legislation by former state Sen. Richard Polanco of Los Angeles. State Parks conducted an extensive recruitment process for the committee, seeking individuals to represent a cross section of the surrounding neighborhoods and the region. It has held a series of public meetings over the last eight months.

Addressing the four major themes, the report said:

- **Connectivity:** The advisory panel said the critical issue for the connectivity of the site is that it fit into the broader design of the Los Angeles River Parkway, as well as the revitalization of downtown.
- **Cultural/Historical:** The new park also will play an important cultural/historical role in the community, committee members agreed, stressing that the Cornfield property provides a conduit to understanding the story of Los Angeles. The advisory report notes that the site is near the location of a once thriving Native American village, near where the Portola Expedition forded the Los Angeles River in 1769. It also is the site of the Zanje Madre, the “mother ditch” built to supply water for irrigation to the early settlers of the region. It later became a major railyard in the 1870s, the first railroad depot in Los Angeles where thousands of new residents embarked on a new life in a new land.
- **Recreation:** Noting the need for more recreational opportunities in the Los Angeles urban area, the committee’s report calls for areas that can help meet the needs of a multitude of individual exercise and team sports. “The Cornfield should include as part of its legacy a balanced park that includes large areas for soccer and other sports, integrated harmoniously with the natural setting and the cultural and historical values at stake in this urban California State Park,” the report said.
- **Transportation:** The report noted that the site has a long history of transportation uses, from the railroads and trolleys of the recent past to the Gold Line commuter rail system now under construction. The park’s design should both recognize the important history of the area, and embrace environmentally friendly transportation systems envisioned in the area’s future, the report said.

The report concludes that development of Cornfield State Park offers an extraordinary opportunity “to do it right.”

“That’s exactly what we pledge to do,” said Ted Jackson, the State Parks Division chief for Southern California. Jackson grew up in the Baldwin Hills area of Los Angeles and recently returned to the area to take charge of California State Parks’ largest division.

Jackson noted that the General Plan process is about to begin for Cornfield. California State Parks develops general plans for each of its parks through a series of public hearings. The plans provide a blueprint for development and operation of the parks, and set forth general themes and goals.

"I am looking forward to embarking on the general plan effort," Jackson said. "Along with community members and other stakeholders, we will use the Advisory Committee's Report and recommendations as a template to create what we feel will become a world class park."

The first public meeting in the process is scheduled for March 19, at a site still to be determined. The meeting will begin with the Cornfield Advisory Committee formally presenting its report.

During the General Plan process, State Parks plans to construct interim facilities on the Cornfield property that will allow for public use. State Parks already has constructed a temporary informational site to keep people up-to-date on development of the park.

The interim use plan includes creation of a central core area suitable for a wide variety of recreational activities, walkways lined by native plants and a series of "pocket parks" of lawn and educational panels. There also will be a multi-purpose plaza, amphitheater, restrooms and off-street parking. Construction of the interim facilities is expected to begin later this year.

The Cornfield property was slated to become an industrial park until members of surrounding neighborhoods and park advocates launched a successful drive to preserve the area for parkland and open space. Gov. Gray Davis stepped in with the necessary bond funds to purchase the property and California State Parks took title in 2001.

"Governor Gray Davis directed us to continue bringing parks closer to the people as a part of his urban parks strategy," said Coleman. "At Cornfield, we are making a significant addition to the State Park opportunities in Los Angeles."

Media Note: Several members of the Advisory Committee have offered to make themselves available today for media interviews: Lewis MacAdams at (323) 662-5880 or (323) 660-6683; Joel Reynolds at (323) 934-6900; Peter Aeschbacher at (213) 629-2702; Ulises Diaz at (213) 483-7400; Munson Kwok at (310) 336-5441.

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